

Victorian Co-operative News

Bulletin of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

Volume 1 Issue 2

June 1994

72nd International Co-operative Day

(Saturday, 2nd July 1994)

Message from the International Co-operative Alliance

The 150th Anniversary of the Rochdale Pioneers

This year the British Co-operative Movement is celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Rochdale Pioneers, whose great achievements were establishing the first successful consumer co-operative society and laying down the Principles by which Co-operatives should be governed.

Today 700 million people around the world share the co-operative legacy of the 28 founders of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society. The co-operative movement has spread from 28 consumers in a small town in the North of England, who joined together in 1844 in order to have access to unadulterated goods at fair prices, to include more than one million co-operative societies of all sizes, in all sectors of the economy, and in more than 100 countries worldwide.

The world is now going through a period of rapid change which often has far-reaching effects on individual men, women and children. The social and cultural dimension of co-operatives profoundly influences the way changes affect our society. This is because co-operatives empower individuals by giving them the chance to shape and implement decisions which have impact on their everyday lives, thus involving them directly in the search for solutions to their economic and social needs.

The ICA recognises that it is only through mutual understanding, co-operation and coexistence that world peace, and thus healthy economic and social development will be globally possible. All member co-operatives of the ICA have pledged to co-operate actively in every practical way with other Co-operatives at local, national and international levels, aiming to achieve unity of action by co-operators throughout the world.

While the history of Rochdale Pioneers will certainly never be forgotten, the future challenge for co-operators is to reach a new and wider audience with the Co-operative message of ordinary people improving their prospects and those of humanity, by working co-operatively.

The International Co-operative Alliance calls on its more than 700,000,000 individual members worldwide to use the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Rochdale Pioneers this year, and the 100th anniversary of the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995, as an opportunity to gain maximum publicity for our movement, for our present achievements and, more importantly, to promote greater understanding of our future goals. ■

News in Brief

New Members

The Board of Directors welcomes the following new members of the Federation:

Chelsea Bayside Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd
Ensa No 3 Co-operative Housing Society Ltd
Toora and District A. B. Co-operative Ltd
Urban Camp Melbourne Co-operative Ltd

Boost to Federation Program

Funds have been received from the Victorian Government to assist the Federation implement its co-operative information and development program.

New Act On The Way

The review of the N.S.W. Co-operatives Act by the Federation has found that while the Act is a significant improvement on the current Victorian Co-operation Act, the N.S.W. Act contains more regulation than other corporate law and the current Victorian Act, and, in some instances, is inconsistent with the co-operative principles.

The Federation compared the provisions of the N.S.W. Act with submissions made previously by Victorian co-operatives to the former Government, and has subsequently submitted over 50 recommendations to the Victorian Attorney-General to improve the N.S.W. model.

The Federation has been informed by the Co-operatives Unit that it is likely that a Bill for a new Act will be presented to State Parliament in the 1995 Autumn Session.

The summary of the recommendations made by the Federation is available free of charge to financial members of the Federation, with the complete submission (80 pages) available for \$10.00 inc. postage.

Contact Tony Gill on (053) 457 466 for details.

Coming Events

Community Co-operatives Seminar

A seminar titled *The A to Z of running a community co-operative* will be held in Sydney, N.S.W. on Saturday, 27th August, 1994. For details telephone George Mannix on (02) 331 5527.

Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd is pleased to advise all members of the Federation and other interested parties of its 1994 Annual General Meeting.

Date: Wednesday 31st August, 1994

Time: 5.30pm - 7.00 pm

Place: Savoy Park Plaza, Melbourne

An agenda for the meeting and resolutions will be forwarded to all members in July.

Publications/Reports

Rental Housing Co-operative Conference

Report of the conference held in Paynesville on 29th October - 1st November 1993 is available from the Federation.

Rural Electric Co-operative Seminar

Transcript of the seminar held in Orbost in July 1993 is available from the Federation.

NSW Co-operatives Act Review

The Federation's recent submission to the Victorian Attorney-General on the NSW Co-operatives Act is available to financial members from the Federation.

Just Like A Family

The experiences of women and children in the Victorian Rental Housing Co-operative Programme. The study is available from Women in Supportive Housing. Telephone: (03) 650 4903

NSW Co-operatives Capital/Fund Raising Conference, November, 1993

The order form for the set of papers of the conference is available from the Federation.

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Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

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Members Profile

Health Co-operative Benefits Patients

by Vern Hughes, Director

South Kingsville Health Services Co-operative Ltd

South Kingsville Health Services Co-operative is a consumer health co-operative. Its guiding principle is that consumers of health services can best provide quality health care for themselves by banding together in a co-operative and employing quality health care professionals on a not-for-profit basis. In a real sense, the patients of our service employ the doctors and shape the direction and policy of the service.

The Co-operative was formed in 1986 and is registered as a Community Advancement Society under the Victorian Co-operation Act. It provides medical, dental, chiropractic, acupuncture, podiatry, massage services and pastoral care. To be eligible for membership, one must be resident of the municipalities of Footscray, Williamstown, Altona or other nearby areas, and be a client and/or staff member of the Co-operative.

Consumer health co-operatives are not new in Australia.

In the nineteenth century, friendly societies began as consumer health co-ops, and provided medical and other services on a pre-paid basis. Over time, the friendly societies ceased to be providers of health care and became largely health insurers, though some still provide dental services. Today, South Kingsville Health Services Co-operative is the only consumer health co-operative in Australia.

Amidst the great changes going on in health care in Australia, the potential for consumer health co-operatives to once again emerge in the Australian scene is very great. Patients of health services now have high expectations of quality service which are rarely met in most existing settings.

Governments and health care authorities pay lip service to enhanced consumer input in health care and its organisation, but baulk at the logical consequence of this sentiment - namely, that consumers, organised in mutual aid associations, are the natural base for the organisation and delivery of consumer oriented, not for profit services.

Neither state socialisation, nor syndicalist professional bodies (the two dominant voices in the health care debate in Australia for much of this century) are able to be fully accountable to consumers and their needs.

In accordance with its consumer philosophy, South Kingsville will next year introduce a patient held health record (being a personalised health history, medication record and health management plan) which will be an entitlement of members of the Co-operative. Such records are seen internationally as a key step forward in quality health care management, and fit perfectly with the structure and philosophy of a consumer health co-operative. ■

South Kingsville Health Services Co-operative Ltd

Formed:	1986
Members:	350
Employees:	32
Address:	19 Vernon Street South Kingsville, 3015
Telephone:	(03) 391 6777
Fax:	(03) 391 3954

Members Profile

The Victorian co-operative sector covers a diverse range of community and business activities.

To foster a greater understanding of the benefits of the co-operative model, a member of the Federation will be profiled in this and future editions of the Victorian Co-operative News.

Co-operative Training: A Renewed Frontier

by Tim Dyce, Executive Director
Asia Pacific Co-operative Training Centre Ltd

The task of building a training culture in the Australian co-operative sector is a daunting one.

What is a 'training culture' anyway? It means in effect that training is seen as an integral part of the growth and development of a co-operative organisation. It means that training costs are treated not as an expense but as an investment. Indeed a decision to invest in the skills of the human resources of the co-operative is just as much a prudent use of member's funds to meet member's needs as is a prudent decision to invest in new technology.

Because co-operatives are traditionally run by practical people, training has often been seen as technical training for staff, while training for managers and directors has taken a back seat. The reality is that all the technical training in the world will not help an organisation if the policy directions from the Board are unclear and if management is not on top of the skills that the vast changes in the economic and social environment now make necessary.

Importantly for co-operatives, the public debate about the quality of management is becoming also a debate about the use of co-operative skills. Co-operative Management is in fact becoming the catch cry and people realise that productivity is improved if organisations move away from autocratic styles of authority to emphasis on teamwork and a special relationship with their customers and suppliers. It would be ironic if co-operatives were left behind in the move towards co-operative management.

The Asia Pacific Co-operative Training Centre, as the training organisation owned by the co-operative sector and dedicated to its needs, has succeeded in developing a management course which blends an understanding of the co-operative model with some of the best co-operative management skills training. ■

The Australian Certificate in Co-operative Management

Next Victorian course to be held in Melbourne,
September - December, 1994

Director Training Courses for Agricultural Co-operatives

Moama, N.S.W. on 9 - 10 July, 1994

Melbourne on 11 - 13 November, 1994

For further information on the above training courses, contact:

Bruce Harvey, APCTC, (03) 615 0508

New name for Registry

By Kris Flowers
Acting Deputy Registrar of Co-operatives

This is the first of the contributions which the 'Co-operatives Unit' will be making to the Federation's Bulletin, and it is hoped to be able to keep members up-to-date with the latest developments and progress in relation to the new Victorian Co-operation Act and the Unit's activities.

It might be best, in this first article, to explain the new structure of the State Government Department of which the 'Co-operatives Unit' is a part.

First of all, as you may have noticed, we are no longer the 'Registry'. We are now known as the 'Co-operatives Unit' (although we still answer to the name of 'Registry' and there is still a Registrar of Co-operatives - and besides it's hard to shed years of using one name). We form part of 'Business Affairs' (formerly known as Corporate Affairs) which is itself one half of the 'Office of Fair Trading' and to top it all off that is just one part of the 'Department of Justice.' All that should explain our new letterhead.

The Unit's complement comprises a staff of twelve including three investigators and a financial analyst. The personal service this office has provided for co-operatives over the years will continue. Co-operatives and their members should always feel free to contact the Unit should they experience problems or difficulties. ■